



## FACT SHEET FOR ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

### Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners through the MBS (Better Access) initiative

Medicare rebates under the *Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners through the MBS (Better Access)* initiative are available for patients with a mental disorder to receive up to ten individual and up to ten group allied mental health services per calendar year. These services are generally provided in courses of treatment, with each course of treatment involving up to six services provided by an allied mental health professional. At the conclusion of each course of treatment, the allied mental health professional must report back to the referring medical practitioner on the patient's progress and the referring practitioner assesses the patient's need for further services.

Mental health services that can be provided under this initiative include Psychological Therapy services provided by eligible clinical psychologists, and Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS) services provided by eligible General Practitioners (GPs), registered psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists.

Rebates for these services are available to patients with a mental disorder who would benefit from a structured approach to the management of their treatment and have been referred by a medical practitioner managing the patient under a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan; a referred psychiatrist assessment and management plan; or on referral by a psychiatrist or paediatrician.

The conditions classified as mental disorders for the purposes of these services are informed by the World Health Organisation, 1996, Diagnostic and Management Guidelines for Mental Disorders in Primary Care: ICD-10 Chapter V Primary Care Version.

There is no single template for referrals; however referrals should include the following information:

- Patient's name
- Patient's date of birth
- Patient's address
- Diagnosis
- List of any current medications
- Number of sessions the patient is being referred for.

All patients require a current Mental Health Treatment Plan (MHTP) to claim a rebate for Better Access services from Medicare. A MHTP may be provided to the allied mental health provider with the referral. A MHTP does not expire. A referral is valid until the referred number of sessions have been completed, regardless of whether a patient chooses to change their allied mental health provider.

### OVERVIEW OF THE ITEMS

There are 32 MBS items for allied mental health services provided on referral by a GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician:

- Items 80000, 80005, 80010 and 80015 – Individual Psychological Therapy services provided by a **clinical psychologist**

- Item 80020 – Group Psychological Therapy Services provided by a **clinical psychologist**
- Items 80100, 80105, 80110 and 80115 – Individual Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by a **registered psychologist**
- Item 80120 – Group Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by a **registered psychologist**
- Items 80125, 80130, 80135 and 80140 – Individual Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by an **occupational therapist**
- Item 80145 – Group Focussed Psychological Strategies Services provided by an **occupational therapist**
- Items 80150, 80155, 80160 and 80165 – Individual Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by a **social worker**
- Item 80170 – Group Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by a **social worker**

From 1 November 2017, the following new items are available 80001, 80011, 80021, 80101, 80111, 80121, 80126, 80136, 80146, 80151, 80161 and 80171 and each specify the requirements the service must satisfy in order to be Medicare-eligible for telehealth psychological therapy and focussed psychological strategies.

Eligible allied mental health professionals may use only the items relevant to their discipline. Allied mental health professionals may set their own fees; however, patients will only receive the rebate set in the Medicare Benefits Schedule.

### Who can provide these services?

All providers wishing to provide Allied Mental Health Psychological Therapy or Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS) services using the Medicare items must be registered with Medicare Australia as meeting the eligibility requirements of the items. Eligibility criteria are described below.

### Psychological Therapy

A person is an allied mental health professional in relation to the provision of a psychological therapy health service if the person:

- Is a psychologist who is registered without limitation as a person who may provide that kind of service under the applicable law in force in the State or Territory in which the service is provided; and
- Either, is a member of the College of Clinical Psychologists of the Australian Psychological Society (APS); or, has been assessed by the APS as meeting the requirements for membership of that College and continues to meet those requirements; or, is endorsed by the Psychological Board of Australia to practice in clinical psychology.

## Focussed Psychological Strategies

A person is an allied mental health professional in relation to the provision of a FPS health service if the person meets one of the following requirements:

- The person is a psychologist who is registered without limitation as a person who may provide that kind of service under the applicable law in force in that State or Territory in which the service is provided;
- The person is a member of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) and certified by AASW as meeting the standards for mental health set out in the document published by AASW titled 'Practice Standards for Mental Health Social Workers', as in force on 8 November 2008;
- The person-
  1. Is an occupational therapist who is registered as a person who may provide that kind of service under the applicable law in force in the State or Territory in which the service is provided; and
  2. Is accredited by Occupational Therapy Australia as:
    - a. Having a minimum of two years experience in mental health; and
    - b. Having undertaken to observe the standards set out in the document published by Occupational Therapy Australia 'Australian Competency Standards for Occupational Therapists in Mental Health' as in force on 1 November 2006.

It is recommended that allied mental health professionals providing FPS services maintain their skill level through continuing professional development (CPD). As of 1 July 2011, providers of FPS services (items 80100 – 80170) are required to have completed ten hours annually of CPD relevant to the provision of FPS to maintain their eligibility to access these items.

A series of online one hour FPS CPD modules are available from the Australian Psychological Society, the Australian Association of Social Workers and Occupational Therapy Australia websites to assist providers in completing their FPS CPD requirements.

For more information, visit:

[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au) and search for Focussed Psychological Strategies fact sheet in the search bar.

### What information is required in the report to the referring practitioner?

On completion of a course of treatment (maximum of six services in any one referral but may be less depending on the referral and the patient's clinical need), allied mental health professionals must provide a written report to the referring medical practitioner. The written report must include information on:

- Any assessments carried out on the patient;

- Any treatment provided; and
- Recommendations on future management of the patient's disorder.

## Other publicly funded programs

Where an exemption under subsection 19(2) of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* has been granted to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service or State/Territory clinic, the allied mental health items apply for services provided by eligible allied mental health professionals salaried by, or contracted to the service, as long as all requirements of the items are met, including registration with Medicare Australia. These services must be direct billed (that is, the Medicare rebate is accepted as full payment for services).


## Changes to the Better Access Initiative

The Australian Government has announced funding of \$9.1 million over four years from 2017-18 to improve access to mental health treatment services for people in rural, remote and very remote locations.

From 1 November 2017, eligible patients with a Mental Health Treatment Plan are able to claim rebates for video consultations through the Medicare Benefits Schedule 'Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners' (Better Access) initiative. The changes announced allow up to seven of ten Better Access mental health consultations to be provided through online channels, with one of the first four sessions required to be delivered through a face-to-face consultation. Relevant services can be delivered by clinical psychologists, registered psychologists, occupational therapists and social workers.

Better Access Telehealth services are available to patients with an assessed mental disorder who would benefit from a structured approach to the management of their treatment needs. The person receiving care must be located in Monash Modified Model (MMM) areas 4 – 7. More information about the Modified Monash Model is available at: [Modified Monash Model](#). The person receiving care must:

- a be eligible for Medicare rebates; and
- b not be admitted to hospital at the time; and
- c not be a patient of an emergency department at the time; and
- d be located both :
  - i. within a telehealth eligible area at the time of the attendance; and
  - ii. located at least 15 kilometres by road from the eligible (treating) allied health provider.



More information about the new Better Access Telehealth services, including Guidelines and an FAQ document, is available through the Better Access telehealth webpage at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-ba-telehealth>

## **Further information**

Further information is available at [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au) or by calling Medicare Australia on 132 150 for providers) or 132 011 (for patients).

Allied Health Providers should refer to the item descriptors and explanatory notes on MBS online at [www.mbsonline.gov.au](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au).

Australian Psychological Society – [www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au)

Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) - [www.aasw.asn.au](http://www.aasw.asn.au)

Occupational Therapy Australia – [www.otaus.com.au](http://www.otaus.com.au)